

The Hammer Times

Operation Enduring Freedom 07-09



Message from the Battalion Commander

This month Charlie Company begins their closure of a very successful operational deployment and redeploys back to Ft. Hood, Texas by the middle of May. During their 15-month deployment, C/62nd contributed to the construction or upgrade of nearly every operating base in Northern Afghanistan. They expanded some 10 Forward Operating Bases, built 2 new Contingency Outposts, constructed 2 roads/combat trails, winterized over 17 operating bases, and provided quality assistance / quality control on 4 large projects. Astounding amount of effort considering it was completed in a combat environment and in some of the most rugged terrain in Afghanistan.

I remember a battlefield circulation visit to OP Hatchet-Mace where during the visit 1LT Barrett's platoon was sling loading a Bobcat-Skid Steer Loader approximately 500 meters across a ravine (on the same observation post) in order to support construction of expanding living space and force protection. At the same location, C/62nd was building hard huts on rock outcroppings where every piece of lumber had to be air lifted from a lower elevation to their construction site. C/62nd had Soldiers dispersed throughout the Northern Afghanistan area of operations for most of their deployment. In fact, during the construction of FOB Altimur and FOB Joyce in November 08, platoon members were seeing each other for the first time after completing 9-months of their deployment. Truly astounding accomplishments by a first class construction company.



Moving dirt at FOB Shank



CPT Moreno & LT Schnell at Wolverine



Filling HESCOs at FOB Altimur



Hauling dirt at FOB Airborne

With the departure of C/62nd we have but a few months remaining towards the completion of an extremely productive deployment. Your Soldiers are amazing. Even after 13-months, each Soldier continues to provide quality and timely construction support. Our Soldiers are highly trained, disciplined, and truly making the difference each and every day. Our staff continues to look for ways of providing the best support to each of our Soldiers and their efforts at Building the Battlefield and Making History. Thank you for supporting our efforts.

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Message from the Battalion Command Sergeant Major

It must be time to come home, everyone seems to be leaving. First Bravo Company and now Charlie Company. The BN Commander and I had the pleasure of presenting Charlie Company their much deserved end of tour awards. Congratulations to the Soldiers, they earned them with all their hard work. I want to welcome the 1613th Engineer Company that is replacing Charlie. I'm sure they will fall right in and not miss a beat.

I want to provide some predictability to the Families in regards to redeployment. It is important the Families and



LTC Zimmerman pins end of tour award on C/62nds SPC Paguirigan.

significant others of our Soldiers ensure that the Rear Detachment has their current contact information. Once a final date is locked in and a flight time is determined the Rear Detachment will call the Families and let them know the time and location for the welcome home ceremony at Fort Hood. For security reasons the actual flight times cannot be put out publically, but the ceremony times can. The only way to get this information is if the rear detachment has up to date contact information. If you're receiving this news letter then more than likely you are keeping up to date; it's those who do not receive this news letter that I am concerned about so please pass the word.



C/Co gets briefed on coming home.

I ask that the Families have some patience with the redeployment process. It doesn't follow an exact schedule. Planes can arrive plus or minus 2 days. I would also ask that everyone beware of purchasing plane tickets, cruise tickets or making any financial commitment tied to a specific date as we cannot guarantee an exact arrival date. Once we arrive at Fort Hood we will have a few days off, after which we will begin the Reintegration Training (RIT). We will then sign out on 30 days of block leave.

I would be remiss if I did not mention safety. I am very concerned that our Soldiers will arrive back home only to get hurt. Vehicle safety is paramount, particularly motorcycle safety. Most Soldiers have not been driving while deployed. Those who have driven have been operating military equipment driven at slow speeds over rough terrain, not at high speeds on the highway. Driving skills are perishable, so I caution our Soldiers to take it easy upon their return and take some time to regain those driving skills. Alcohol is a concern as well. There is no shortage of alcohol; it will still be there the next day so Soldiers should drink responsibly and try not to make up for 15 months in one night. It would be a tragedy to survive 15 months in a combat zone to have something happen back in the states after redeploying.

Lastly, I can't express enough the great work our Soldiers have done and are continuing to accomplish on a daily basis. We are truly "Building the Battlefield".

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Headquarters and Support Company "Pale Riders"



HSC moves dirt across Sharana with the 166th Engineer Co.

HSC Pale Riders continue their efforts into the thirteenth month of the deployment. While missing family and looking forward to being home in just two more months, your Soldiers continue to make a difference in accomplishing the battalion's mission. Despite the constant stress, these fantastic warriors get up every day and perform exceptionally. You can be proud of each Soldier's strength of character throughout this deployment as we finish up "building the battlefield" here at Sharana.



LT Mockus serves his unit in more ways than one

The maintenance sections are consistently providing outstanding support to the battalion. They have completed the critical maintenance mission of scheduled services. This mission includes servicing each piece of equipment in the entire fleet from roof to wheels. The team worked countless hours to ensure vehicles were always available for missions. In addition to the scheduled work, both the direct support and organizational maintenance platoons perform phenomenally every day. They are the motor behind the entire mission. The bottom line is there is no mission accomplishment without these outstanding mechanics, clerks and supervisors.

The Equipment Platoon (EQ) continues to excel as an attachment to A Company. I hear fantastic reports from CPT Monney and other A Company leaders lauding the platoon's performance. The company also supported the movement of A Company's equipment from FOB Kushamond to FOB Sharana. Braving dangerous roads last month they arrived safely back at Sharana with all equipment accounted for and prepared for further movement. In addition, a detachment of the platoon began a major horizontal construction project on FOB Sharana.



SPC Merferlan prepares a vehicle for repair.

As we prepare for our return we are slowly focusing our efforts on redeployment preparations. Every Soldier is focused on sending their personal items home and trimming down the amount of gear they will travel with during the trip home. The company supply section and the leaders responsible for their equipment have been working very hard to ensure we have a smooth transition of property from our company to the two companies that are replacing us. There have been long hours inventorying every piece of equipment the company is responsible for.

In BAF, the ALOC also is performing exceptionally well while executing diverse operations. They are processing information, personnel and equipment for the battalion in addition to incorporating the incoming companies in order to set them up for success. Every Soldier that comes in from the unit replacing ours will be directly impacted by the hard work of the ALOC. They ensure billeting, transportation and other resources are coordinated in order to make the transition of incoming units is as smooth as possible.

Though we continue to stay busy in our last days in theatre, we are all anxious to see our Families again very soon. We recognize that our efforts down range would mean nothing without the amazing support we've received from home. Our hope is that you are as proud of the work done here as we are, for we do it, at least in part, as a reflection of our gratitude and service to you, our Families.

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Alpha Company "Gators"



A Company continues to stay busy putting the finishing touches on the Phase II expansion of FOB Shank. Soldiers will also be engaged with our new mission to support construction for Task Force 222, a Jordanian Ranger battalion. The company is tasked to build living areas, Battalion and Company Headquarters buildings and two outlying bases to support over 1000 Jordanian troops.

1st Platoon, now led by 1LT Rhodes and SFC Baker-Benitez, have finally joined the rest of the Company at FOB Shank. They wrapped up their quality of life improvements at several outlying outposts and will now be conducting operations at FOB Shank. This month they will build four office buildings to support the Phase II expansion and TF Wings Aviation Battalion. The buildings will be used to support the maintenance element for 10 AH-64 Apaches, 20 UH-60 Blackhawks and 25 CH-47 Chinooks.



1st Platoon works on Maintenance offices.

2nd Platoon completed two office buildings for TF Wings this month. The buildings were completed one week ahead of schedule and will support the Aviation Battalion's support and logistical personnel. 2nd Platoon is about to begin work on a Battalion Headquarters office building and a Company Headquarters for the Jordanian Ranger Battalion arriving soon.

Our Earthmoving Platoon, now led by 1LT Barnes and SFC Spies, has made outstanding progress this month on the airfield. They have completed all ground preparations for the helicopter landing zone, runway and parking areas. This month, they will construct a new outpost for the Jordanian Task Force, which will provide 2 Jordanian companies with a base for conducting counterinsurgency operations and will house over 300 Soldiers.

Maintenance Platoon continues to provide first class maintenance and repair service to both our EM Platoon and Equipment Platoon. The Soldiers work hard to maintain over 30 pieces of heavy construction equipment, keeping them operational. This allows the Earthmovers to prepare the groundwork for the construction of the new Jordanian outpost.

Our time in Afghanistan is coming to a close. But your Soldiers continue to work hard and make a difference in this country.

**Until next month, Gators,
"Death Roll!"**



The Soldiers of Maintenance Platoon

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Charlie Company "Cobras"



Charlie Company has completed a considerable amount of construction in its last full month in country, and is in the process of handing over the reigns to the 1613th Engineer Company. 1st platoon was hard at work this month constructing B-Huts and guard towers at the new COP Xio Haq while the EM platoon focused on the earthwork. 2nd Platoon continued work this month on the B-Huts at COP Penich, while also beginning work on a SEA Hut. Headquarters and Maintenance stayed busy supporting the work at COP Xio Haq and COP Penich simultaneously, while also preparing for the arrival of the 1613th.

1st platoon made great progress at COP Xio Haq, completing four guard towers and multiple B-Huts. The platoon sent a squad down to FOB Wolverine to assist the 68th Engineer Company, but the squad was able to rejoin the platoon at Xio Haq prior to moving off of the project site. The platoon was happy to finish the work on their last project together.

2nd platoon completed almost 20 B-Huts this month at COP Penich and began work on the SEA Hut. They were able to provide improved living areas for Soldiers at this brand new COP in minimal time, greatly improving the quality of life there. The platoon worked tirelessly, leaving only a small amount of work for the Soldiers from the 1613th to complete.

EM platoon continued moving dirt out at Xio Haq and have completed a great deal of work. They completed a helicopter landing zone, a large HESCO perimeter, and prepared the ground for 20 B-Huts and a SEA Hut. They also sent a squad down to Wolverine to assist with construction, and were able to get the squad back to Xio Haq to move a little more dirt before moving back to Jalalabad.



EM clearing and grubbing at Xio Haq



C Co Soldiers prepare for end of tour awards.

Maintenance spent the last month working tirelessly to ensure that our equipment was up and running for the arrival of the 1613th. Our maintenance team has maintained an operational readiness above 80% the entire deployment despite the harsh environment and equipment being spread across multiple locations. They have done a great job of keeping the companies heavy equipment up and running so that EM can keep pushing dirt. HQ platoon has been putting in endless hours ensuring both a successful redeployment and hand off to the 1613th ESC. They organized container shipment and customs inspections for everything returning state-side. HQ also trained most of the 1613th's advanced party on the daily operations in country.



C Co's XO LT Jean Archer says "Peace Out!"

The Convoy Team has been busy doing both convoys to bring supplies and personnel to job sites and helping 1st platoon and EM platoon operating equipment and constructing guard towers at Xio Haq. In addition they also returned to FOB Fenty to train the entire 1613th company on proper combat procedures. It has been a long 15 months out here in Afghanistan and I am sure the same for you back in the states. We are all very excited to meet up with friends and family but our journey doesn't end until we land in the states. Welcome us in a few weeks with open arms and big smiles. See you soon. Charlie Cobra signing out from Afghanistan!

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68th Combat Support Equipment "Trailblazers"

With the arrival of May we have reached the 13th month of this deployment and are one step closer to that long awaited flight home. Not much has changed with regards to the company footprint and the same can be said for the constant push on FOB Wolverine expansion. With the approaching summer months, the cooler days are becoming few and far between as the daily temperature slowly inches upward. Although it has not reached the ridiculous temperatures of Iraq, the extremely dry environment has made construction operations a challenge at times because of brown-out conditions, none-the-less our troops are doing what they love to do which is pushing dirt. However, some rain from time to time would be greatly appreciated



LT Cummins prepares for the daily operations meeting

in order to reduce the number of dirt covered faces! First platoon currently is constructing a rotary wing parking area and much like the LSA pads, has required a significant amount of work. The long hours spent operating equipment and supervising put forth by Soldiers such as SPC Constant and SGT Heckt is evident as the project comes to an end. Having cut sections down as much as 18 feet, working 24 hours and moving over 50,000 cubic meters of fill, the self proclaimed "money makers" are leaving their mark on Regional Command South. Meanwhile second platoon started construction of two helicopter taxiways that are over 2000ft long. Building a FOB in an area filled with deep wadis (dry riverbeds), has provided significant construction challenges. Having to fill four 100ft long and 30ft deep wadis has consumed a large portion of their efforts. Looking at the project as it stands today; the land is almost completely level, making it difficult to appreciate the engineer effort that these troops put forward.

Finally our third platoon has focused all their effort on the construction of a helicopter fueling point that is approximately 450ft x 650ft. At initial glance the scope of this project seems minimal but its completion posed its own unique challenges. Even with the platoon sergeant on leave, the squad leaders and Soldiers have performed extremely well. And for our mechanics, they have done what they always do. Working the long hours needed to maintain the fleet, using everything from duct tape to bubble gum; these Soldiers are the true unsung heroes of the battlefield. Despite pushing earth all day every day, our Soldiers always return back to the comforts of the FOB. Although all the amenities of a large FOB are not available, the hot chow, showers and latrines provided by government contractors help keep the troops ready for every mission.



View of project site at FOB Wolverine

In addition, the recent connection of our SPAWARE MWR system has only made the FOB better for Army, Air Force and Romanian Soldiers that are working together to complete the mission on schedule. We all look forward to that plane ride home, and again, thank you all for all that you do.



Maintenance Soldiers construct metal culverts to support the company

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Soldier Highlights

68th Co Soldier of the Month

SPC Sampson Whitten is from Griffin, Georgia. He is among the best heavy equipment operators in the 68th Engineer Company (CSE), and can be called upon to skillfully run several different pieces of equipment to include the 621B Scraper, the 130G Grader, and the D7 Dozer. His willingness to learn new equipment makes him a versatile and reliable asset to both his platoon and company. He completes virtually any task given and his leaders can trust that the task given will be a success. He is eagerly awaiting his unit's redeployment and is looking forward to returning to Georgia on leave to see his entire family.



Charlie Co Soldiers of the Month

SSG Gibson and SSG Bowers are two EM platoon squad leaders that have done an exemplary job this past year after joining the company during the deployment. Their hard work and dedication to duty has paid off and they will be pinned with the rank of SFC sometime in this year. Both have made the promotion list and are awaiting their sequence number to come up. These two individuals have proven to be outstanding NCOs and will shortly be assuming the position of platoon sergeant. Great job and good luck!



HSC Soldier of the Month

SPC Francisco Murillo is an essential asset to 1st squad of EQ platoon. A native to Brownsville, Texas, SPC Murillo left home and joined the Army in August 1997. In January 2007 he proudly joined the HSC Pale Rider team and settled in to EQ platoon as an 88M. SPC Murillo has demonstrated unequaled technical competence. He is an extremely diversified operator and has contributed to several projects by operating 20 ton dump trucks, bucket loaders, and rollers. SPC Murillo is not only competent at working with heavy equipment, but he is also a skilled HMMWV and MRAP driver who is well versed on the Army's communication systems. Currently SPC Murillo is engaged in a project at FOB Shank with half of EQ. The soldiers are all attached to Alpha Company's EM platoon and working hard together to complete the phase II expansion. SPC Murillo has put in many hours on this project and has hauled several hundreds of cubic meters of fill and gravel all over the jobsite. SPC Murillo is looking forward to seeing his two beautiful daughters once he gets home.



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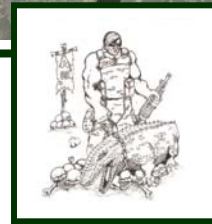
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Alpha Co Soldier of the Month

SPC Mays is a Soldier of 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company. His experience, hard work and dedication to mission completion has been an instrumental part of the installation of several HVAC units on 5 guard towers, as well as the design and installation of the electrical work in a 7200 sq ft office building constructed for the Aviation Task Force at FOB Shank. He has displayed an outstanding drive to become a well rounded engineer and future NCO by filling a carpenter slot during the construction of the ALOC Sea-Hut, a 3600 sq ft hardened building. SPC Mays is our senior electrician and has volunteered his time to complete numerous electrical projects on FOB Shank, including a barber shop, offices to support the maneuver forces at FOB Shank and a mobile office for the Platoon. SPC Mays is supported by his wife and 9 month old son.



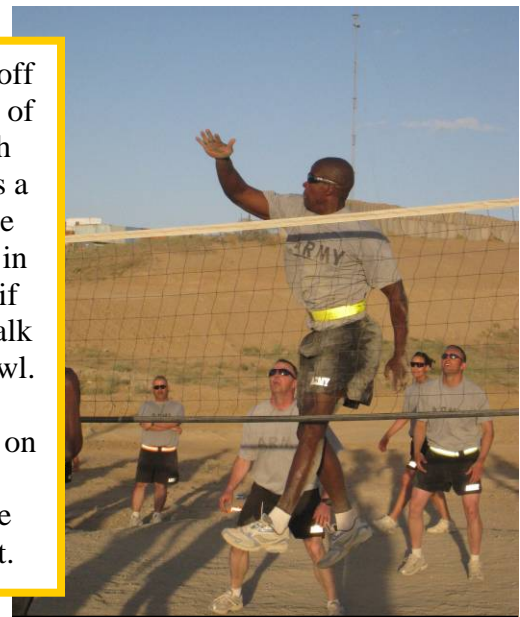
A Little Fun in the Sun at FOB Sharana



LT Wilson and SSG Romero face off.

Officers and NCOs face off at 1630 for the best 3 out of 5 volleyball games each Saturday. Sometimes it's a good way to re-build the camaraderie after a year in theatre together; that is if we can keep the smack talk from turning it into a brawl.

Enlisted Soldiers play either NCO's or Officers on alternate weekends. PT and a little fun at the same time...gotta love it.



SFC LaFontant gets major air time.

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A little CH EEZ



Greetings 62nd Family,

A little story from Max Lucado:

A young woman, eight months heavy with child, waddles into her mother's house, flops onto the sofa, kicks off her tennis shoes, props her puffy feet on the coffee table and groans, "I don't think I can make it."

Wise from many years, her mother picks up a photo album and sits down beside her daughter. She opens the album to photos of her children in diapers and ankle-high walking shoes. Slowly the two turn the memory-filled pages. They smile at the kids blowing out candles and sitting in front of Christmas trees.

As the mother sees yesterday, the daughter sees tomorrow. And, for just a moment, the daughter is changed. The here and now becomes the there and then. Her child is born. She sees the first



Did you know that Texas and Afghanistan are roughly the same size?
Yep! Just a little CH EEZy trivia.

stumbling step taken. She hears the first word, discernible only to Mommy. She places shiny, black patent-leather shoes on stocking feet and Karo-syrups a ribbon on a nearly bald but ever-so-precious head. A transformation occurs. The pain in her back is now overshadowed by the joy approaching. The hand that had rubbed the neck now rests on her stomach. For the first time that day, she smiles.

We have been here in Afghanistan for many months now, and it's easy to get discouraged while looking at the last days ahead. The continued separation from loved ones, the daunting missions here in theatre, and even the fears of daily life in a war zone can make us feel like the end is nowhere in sight. But let me assure you, "this too shall pass." And the joys that lie ahead will definitely overshadow the melancholy of today's struggles. It helps me to remember two things. The first is that my role here in Afghanistan is for a greater purpose. As a former Brigade Chaplain put it so eloquently, "We are here taking part in the reawakening of a land that has long struggled in darkness." And secondly, the same God who watches over me in the comforts of my homeland watches over me in this land far, far away as well.

While we all long for the day of re-deployment, I hope we use this time away from those we love, to draw closer to the One who loves us most. Soldiers and family members back home have been given a tremendous opportunity in this deployment to see just what God can grow and develop inside us through these pains of deployment. Keep your focus on God and hope in His love for us all. And remember, "He is here, He is good, and this too shall pass."



Baby CH EEZ waiting for Dad.

One final note, I've been asked to inform all of the families that **June 15th** is the last day to send mail. If you send it after that, there's a chance your soldier will not be here to get it...and it's highly unlikely to return to sender.

Blessings All,
CH Everett E. Zachary (CH EEZ)

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